

Piute Lookout 02G

Lat/Lon 35.479945,-118.359497
UTM 11S 376669E 3927119N

Elevation: 8326'

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Location: Kern County, about 12 miles southeast of the town of Lake Isabella, 165 miles from Los Angeles

Nearby peaks: Bald Eagle Peak, Weldon Peak, Sorrell Peak

Land Manager: Sequoia National Forest, Kern River Ranger District (760) 376-3781

USE AT YOUR OWN RISK. CONDITIONS MAY CHANGE, AND UNEXPECTED HAZARDS MAY BE PRESENT.

About the peak

Piute Lookout gets its name for the Chemehuevi (Southern Piute) Indians who once lived there and one of the earliest USFS lookouts that was originally built in a tree house at the summit. It was added to the HPS Peak List in 1969. In 2002, the recognized summit (for purposes of HPS peakbagging) was briefly moved to nearby Piute Peak, then returned to the historical lookout site.

Route 1 is 0.5 miles round trip with a total of 200' of gain on road. There are excellent views in several directions if you scramble to the high point on the summit block. Consider a short side trip to Piute Peak and Piute High Point on your way back. Piute is usually hiked in combination with Sorrell and Weldon in a very long driving day.

Piute Lookout has 2 official HPS routes:

Piute Lookout Route 1

Distance: 0.5 mile round trip on road and trail Gain: 200
Time: 0.5 hour round trip
Difficulty rating: Class 1, easy Navigation difficulty: Easy
Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#) Road type: High-clearance

Driving directions:

- Lake Isabella approach:
- Exit SR 178 at Borel Road 3 miles before reaching the town of Lake Isabella.
- Turn east, then turn left toward Bodfish at 0.2 mile, then turn right at Lake Isabella Road.
- Drive about 3 miles to Bodfish.
- Drive through the town of Bodfish on Lake Isabella Road (which becomes Caliente-Bodfish Road) for about 3.2 miles to dirt Saddle Spring Road (27S02) on the left at the very top of a grade. Turn left. Note your odometer and go as follows:
- Drive in 5.7 miles, to where 27S02 meets the main ridge before crossing over to the south side. This is the parking spot for Bald Eagle Peak.
- At 17 miles, fork to the left signed "Piute Vista / 2 miles". Turn left on 28S17.
- Reset your odometer. Drive in on 28S17 (shortly meeting and taking a major downhill fork on the right) for 2.6 miles, or as far as feasible, keeping right at forks, to a parking area where the road narrows and becomes steep. Park here. 4WD vehicles may continue a short distance to a second parking spot at the end of the drivable road.
- Tehachapi approach:
- Drive northwest on SR 58 from the town of Tehachapi about 15 miles to Caliente Junction (Bealville Road). Turn right.
- Drive 13.5 miles to Walker Basin Road. Turn right.
- Drive 9.5 miles to Piute Mountain Road. (Dirt road driving from this point to trailhead.) Turn left.
- Drive about 9 miles past Saddle Springs Road (27S02) to 28S17. Turn left.
- Reset your odometer. Drive in on 28S17 (shortly meeting and taking a major downhill fork on the right) for 2.6 miles, or as far as feasible, keeping right at forks, to a parking area where the road narrows and becomes steep. Park here. 4WD vehicles may continue a short distance to a second parking spot at the end of the drivable road.
- Piute Mountain Road approach:
- Piute Mountain Road via Jawbone Canyon and Harris Grade, 160 miles from Los Angeles. This route variation is the recommended route for all vehicles in the guidebook Exploring the Southern Sierra: West Side by J.C. Jenkins and Ruby Jenkins, 1995, and is very highly recommended for those drivers without 4WD or high clearance vehicles.

- From the SR 14-SR 58 split just north of the town of Mojave, take SR 14 northeast for 20 miles to the junction with Jawbone Canyon Road.
- Turn left (west) on Jawbone Canyon Road (pavement ends at 4 miles) for 18 miles on well-graded road to a junction with Kelso Valley Road (dirt) that joins from the north. Here you have a choice.
- Main Route:
- Ordinary vehicles should note their odometers and head north on Kelso Valley Road 7.4 miles to Piute Mountain Road (dirt).
- Note your odometer, turn left onto Piute Mountain Road. At 7.4 miles you see 29S04 on your left (southeast), marked "Sorrell Peak". This is the turnoff for Sorrell Peak.
- At 9.7 miles you meet Jawbone Canyon Road coming in on your left (south). This junction may also be reached using the following directions.
- Variation (saves 4 miles):
- If your vehicle is sturdy with high clearance you may stay left on Jawbone Canyon Road at the junction 18 miles from the main turnoff from SR 14. Note your odometer and proceed as follows:
- Jawbone Canyon Road becomes County Route 589, which then passes the parking area for Weldon Peak shortly after ascending steeply up Geringer Grade.
- At 10 miles proceed straight (north) at a marked junction for Mace Meadow.
- At 13.1 miles meet Piute Mountain Road. Turn left/west here and you rejoin the main driving description.
- Reset your odometer. Continue northwest on Piute Mountain Road through the site of Claraville, continuing past a side junction on your right at 1.9 miles.
- At 5.2 miles, find a junction with 28S17 on your right (north). Turn right (north).
- Reset your odometer. Drive in on 28S17 (shortly meeting and taking a major downhill fork on the right) for 2.6 miles, or as far as feasible, keeping right at forks, to a parking area where the road narrows and becomes steep. Park here. 4WD vehicles may continue a short distance to a second parking spot at the end of the drivable road.

Hiking directions:

- From either parking area, hike in as far as possible on the road.
- Pick up a use trail to the right side (east) that goes up through rocks to the summit on the old lookout foundation.
- The register, when present, is located on the western side of this foundation.

Additional Route notes:

Piute Lookout Route 2

Distance: 3.2 miles round trip on road and trail

Difficulty rating: Class 1, easy

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

Gain: 1300

Time: 2 hours round trip

Navigation difficulty: Easy

Road type: High-clearance

Driving directions:

- Follow driving directions for Route 1 to Piute Mountain Road.
- Whether approaching from the east (5.0 miles from Claraville), or from the west (26 miles from Bodfish), leave Piute Mountain Road at the junction with the French Meadow Road (FR 28S27), which leads north along French Gulch to Alaska Flat. There is signage and a seasonal gate at this junction.
- Reset your odometer. Continue 3.1 miles north on this road. On the left side of the road is a barrier for the purpose of stopping vehicles from using a clear and well-used motorcycle trail. Park here, where there is space for two cars to pull off the road and park in front of the barriers.

Hiking directions:

- From the very limited parking area, hike west on the Alaska Flat Trail, a well-defined motorcycle trail, which ascends a ridge and turns south towards Piute Lookout.
- The trail follows the line of the ridge, over a “bump”, losing altitude into a hollow/ravine, and then climbing again onto the rocky east-west spine of Piute Lookout.
- At the high point of the motorcycle trail, turn east (left) and walk approximately a quarter of a mile to the base of the peak and a parking area for what was once a fire lookout.
- Follow the rocky path and stairs to the rocky summit. The register, when present, is located on the western side of the old lookout foundation.

Additional Route notes: